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COUNTRY USSR (Armenian SSR)

REPORT

SUBJECT Political and Economic Information on
the Armenian SSR

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A seven-page report dealing with political and economic conditions in the
Armenian SSR

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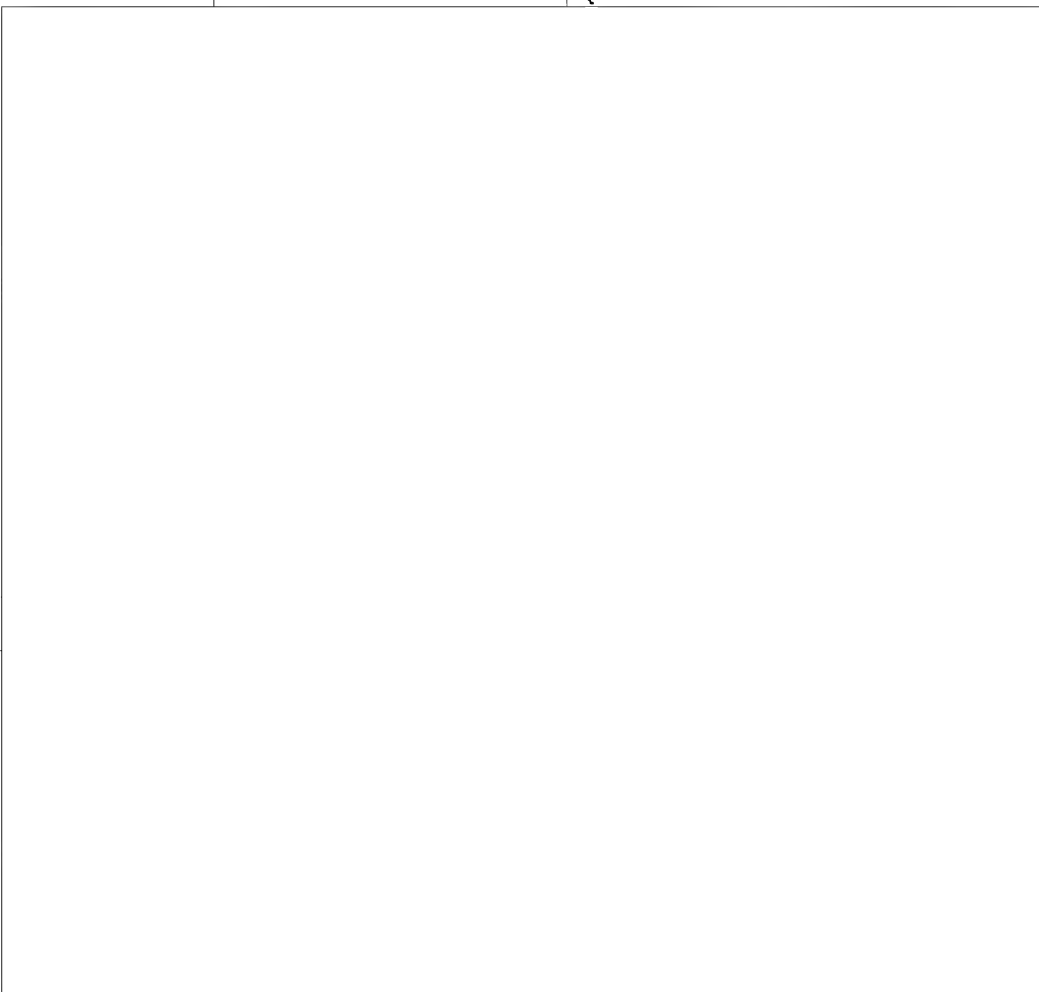
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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT


C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L**COUNTRY:** USSR (Armenian SSR)**DATE:** 16 May 1958**SUBJECT:** Socio-Political and Economic Information
on Armenian SSR**NO OF PAGES:** 7**DATE OF INFORMATION:** 

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PLACE ACQUIRED:

1.  the showdown between Khrushchev and his most powerful rivals in June 1957, which ended with the ousters of Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich from the Presidium,  was a climax to a power struggle which had been going on in the Kremlin for sometime.  this struggle for power was intensified following Khrushchev's efforts

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-2-

to superimpose and implement his virgin land development program and decentralization plan, which were strongly opposed by the Stalinist faction. Moreover, this faction, headed by Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich, was highly suspicious of Khrushchev's motives, despite the outward semblance of collective leadership ostensibly operating in the context of the Soviet hierarchy. [redacted] Bulganin's elevation to the Premier's position, after Malenkov was forced to step down, was a temporary compromise between these two factions to keep Khrushchev's personal ambitions in check. Following the elimination of his bitter rivals in the Soviet Presidium, the consensus [redacted]

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was that Khrushchev was now in the driver's seat and would in all probability extend his domination and control over the Communist Party. Bulganin was generally considered to be Khrushchev's mouthpiece, particularly after the [redacted]

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2. [redacted] there was no discernible impact of the de-Stalinization drive in the Armenian SSR, nor [redacted] any demonstrations for or against this movement. [redacted] living conditions appeared to be generally improved after Stalin's death. This was particularly evident during the period Malenkov served as Premier. This improvement in living standards was reflected in a more abundant supply of consumer goods in various Soviet shops and in reasonable food prices. After Malenkov's ouster as Premier [redacted] living conditions for the average Armenian family gradually deteriorated. Apart from a critical housing shortage due to the scarcity of building materials and Soviet emphasis on the construction of plants and factories, living costs had risen faster than wages. Additionally, there were continual shortages of consumer goods, which were quickly bought up by speculators and resold to the people at a considerable profit. [redacted] there was widespread dissatisfaction among the Armenian workers and peasants with the present Communist regime for failure to meet their needs for a better and freer life.
3. Despite the fact that the Armenians intensely dislike the Communist regime, [redacted] relations between the Armenian population and Russians residing in Yerevan were friendly and amicable. Soviet Air Force personnel stationed in Yerevan were well disciplined and conducted themselves properly at all times. Whatever administrative or military control existed in Yerevan was largely exercised over the military personnel, a large airfield, and military facilities located in the city proper. [redacted] this administrative control by the military authorities did not extend to the civilian population. Conversely, Yerevan was, by and large, administered and controlled by Armenian nationals. Suren Tomasyan, a Communist of long standing, heads this administration in Yerevan. Key positions were usually occupied by Armenians who were members of the Communist Party. [redacted] some Russian nationals held minor positions in the administration [redacted]

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-3-

4. The causative factors which precipitated a riot during a soccer match in Yerevan in September 1955, largely stemmed from an intense rivalry between a Russian soccer team from Sverdlov and an Armenian team representing Yerevan. This was a final season play-off match to decide which team would go to Moscow as a regional representative in the championship soccer play-offs. [redacted] prior to the start of the game, a rumor had been circulating among the Armenian spectators that someone in Moscow had directed that the Yerevan team was not to be permitted to go to Moscow, that the Russian team representing Sverdlov must be the winner of this final match. The fact that Russian officials were sent from Moscow to officiate this play-off match added considerable credence to this rumor from the spectators' point of view. As the game got underway, it was evident that both teams were obviously well-matched. At the end of the first period both teams were tied with two field goals. ^{However, in the second period, the Yerevan team scored two field goals.} These were disallowed by the Moscow officials, who claimed that fouls were committed by a Yerevan player each time a field goal was scored. At this point, [redacted] feelings were running high, not only among the Armenian players who protested these decisions, but the Armenian spectators as well. Towards the closing minutes of the soccer match, with the score still tied at two all, the officials penalized a Yerevan player for committing a personal foul (ostensibly his hand was struck by a kicked ball near his own goal). A free kick was granted to the Sverdlov team, which was successfully converted into a goal. The score then was 3-2 in favor of Sverdlov. A few minutes later the game ended. Spectators immediately swarmed out on the field shouting their anger at the Russian officials. A barrage of stones, bottles, and other objects were thrown at the officials, who were trying to duck out of the way of the mob. The local militia took the Russian officials under their protective custody when it became apparent that the mob set out to do bodily injury to them. When the mob of angry spectators refused to disperse, the militia was forced to open fire, killing several people and wounding many others. A large number of spectators were also injured by flying stones and other objects during this riot. [redacted] this soccer match had strong nationalistic overtones, whose final outcome resulted in considerable bitterness between the Armenians and the Russians.
5. [redacted] the population in Yerevan took Khrushchev's statements seriously in connection with an imminent outbreak of hostilities between Syria and Turkey in fall 1957. Inasmuch as Syria was being supported by the USSR and Turkey had the backing of the US, many Armenians felt that an outbreak of hostilities between these two countries would automatically draw these two major powers into such a conflict. Many [redacted] secretly welcomed the prospects of such a war, since they felt that their only hope of liberation from the Communist yoke lay in a major war between the Soviet Union and the US. [redacted] this feeling was shared by a large majority of the people living in the Armenian SSR. [redacted] there was no anti-Turkish feeling engendered at the time of this war scare over Syria, despite the fact that historically, the Armenians had many reasons to dislike the Turks.

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-4-

6. In the postwar period between 1947-1948, [redacted] approximately 8,000 to 10,000 Armenian nationals were repatriated by the Soviets to the Armenian SSR from France, Greece, and the US. After being exposed to adverse living conditions under the Communist regime, the large majority would have returned to their former places of residence had the Communist authorities permitted them. When Foreign Minister Pineau of France visited Armenia in 1956, many former repatriates from France discussed with him the possibilities of returning to France again. As an outcome of these discussions, Pineau promised to take up their request with the Communist authorities in Moscow. Being hopeful that he would be successful, many former repatriates sold their homes and personal effects in preparation for their imminent [contemplated] departure from the Soviet Union. When it was subsequently learned that Pineau's request was categorically rejected by the Soviets, these Armenians found themselves in a dilemma. [redacted] many were apprehensive, fearing that the Soviet authorities would take some drastic action against them for desiring to leave Armenia. Others who had sold their houses and other personal effects were faced with the problem of looking for other living quarters. When the Communist authorities took no action against these Armenians, many drifted back to their former status, utterly discouraged and embittered by the turn of events. Former repatriates from Greece and the US were not affected by Pineau's visit, having given up all hope of ever returning to their former places of residence in the West. 25X1
7. [redacted] 25X1
- [redacted] there were three Armenian churches in Yerevan. Religious services were largely attended by women and members of the old Armenian generation. Few, if any, of the younger generation went to church, as a result of Communist efforts to discourage religious practice among the youth. [redacted] 25X1 25X1
- [redacted] many Armenian Communists reportedly have their children baptized at home by the priests, since they fear their standing in the Communist Party would be seriously affected if they openly brought their children to church for this purpose. Young priests were trained in a seminary, which was located in Echmiadzin (N 40-10, E 44-18). [redacted] 25X1
8. Historically, the small Armenian minority, which settled in the Georgian provinces prior to the Russian Revolution, never got along well with the Georgians. A feeling of mutual distrust and a strong antagonism gradually developed over a period of years which marred relations between these two conflicting national elements. As a consequence, many Armenian families pulled up stakes after the Revolution and either settled in the Armenian SSR, or emigrated to countries in the West. [redacted] in 1951, the Georgians literally forced many Armenians still living in their midst to give up their homes and business enterprises. The large majority of those ejected from Georgian territory were subsequently resettled in Armenia. [redacted] this action only served to intensify the inherent feelings of hate, distrust, and animosity between the Armenians and Georgians, which persists to this day. 25X1 25X1

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-5-

A. [] Anastas Mikoyan was generally held in high esteem by members of the Armenian Communist Party. He was considered to possess a brilliant intellect, the shrewdness of a horse trader, unrivaled experience in economic administration, and a decided flair for political maneuver. Some have even speculated that Mikoyan provided much of the initiative and planning in the drives within the Communist Party and for this reason, his future tenure among the ruling members of the Soviet hierarchy was relatively secure. Conversely, [] Mikoyan was generally disliked by the Armenian peasant and working classes, because he has done so little to improve their living conditions. Many feel that he was essentially an opportunist, who has used his talents to further his personal aggrandizement, rather than those of his own people. 25X1

9. All efforts on the part of the authorities to curtail and eliminate speculation in Yerevan have been relatively unsuccessful. [] the Armenians were basically "capitalistic" at heart, [] this inherent tendency for profit making was something the Communists would never be able to change or suppress among their people. Up to October 1957, a large bazaar was centrally located in Yerevan, where people could buy, sell, or exchange merchandise freely without being molested by the authorities. [] this bazaar was suddenly closed by the city government, in view of the large-scale speculations being carried on by certain elements of the population. [] speculation had assumed such gigantic proportions that in essence, it had a capitalistic flavor which was becoming obnoxious to the authorities in Yerevan. The extent and type of speculation varied, [] depending on the supply and demand of specific consumer goods. The common practice of speculators was to buy up merchandise, such as sewing machines, radios, cameras, refrigerators, and other consumer items, available on the local market. Purchases were usually made by inside contacts with employees working in the state stores, who were paid off accordingly. These products were then hoarded by the speculators until such time as they were unavailable in state stores. Speculators would then proceed to sell these items to prospective buyers, gaining as much as 50 percent profit on these deals. These transactions were carried on covertly between individuals, now that the bazaar had been closed down. Many of the so-called "big time" operators have grown wealthy by speculation and black-marketing in Yerevan. 25X1

10. [] there was widespread dissatisfaction among the population in Yerevan in connection with the lack of suitable housing construction. In some respects, this had assumed critical proportions among certain segments of the Armenian population, who were forced to live in one room with their families. Although there was a great impetus given to construction in the early postwar period, this construction was largely confined to the building of new plants and some apartment houses for workers and managerial personnel. For example, [] the construction of a huge cable manufacturing plant, which employed several thousand workers in Yerevan. The construction on this plant began about 1954; it was still being expanded and enlarged [] Hence, a great deal of the building materials were being allocated to similar government construction projects on a priority basis, despite the critical housing shortage for the working population in Yerevan. 25X1

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-6-

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A. Individuals who attempted to build their own homes were faced with the problem of securing necessary building materials, such as cement, bricks, lumber and other supplies, which were usually unobtainable through normal channels. As a consequence, many were forced to resort to bribing Soviet construction officials or go to speculators on the black-market for these materials. The usual blackmarket procedure was to contact a construction engineer working on some government construction project. Once the necessary financial arrangements were effected, the engineer delivered the required building materials to the individual's place of residence. This was accomplished by a truck driver from the engineer's construction project, who loaded up at a government supply depot and dropped off some of this materiel at the individual's residence before proceeding to the construction project. This illegal channel was frequently used by private individuals, and although the local authorities were aware of such dealings, they seldom attempted to interfere with such transactions.

many of the administrative officials in Yerevan had built their own homes in this manner and were therefore prone to sympathize with those who were forced to resort to illegal channels to secure the required materials for building their homes.

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B. New housing construction in the form of large apartment buildings were generally assigned as follows: About 20 percent was allocated to the large contingent of Soviet Air Force personnel and their families stationed in Yerevan; 15 to 20 percent for workers in various city plants; and over 50 percent to administrative and managerial personnel, who belonged to the Communist Party.

11. Work assignments on specified construction projects where carpenters (plotniki) and bricklayers (kamenshchiki) were needed were delegated by the local city building directorate which worked closely with the trade union. Although a master carpenter or master bricklayer usually had workers assigned to his project by the directorate, he did have some latitude in accepting or rejecting such workers who did not meet the skill specifications required to accomplish his own task as supervisor on a given assignment. A good carpenter or bricklayer was seldom unemployed. Apart from their regular employment on government projects, many used their free time on weekends to earn additional money. some skilled craftsmen have been known to earn as much as 500 to 1,000 rubles a month in addition to their regular salaries. Carpenters and bricklayers were classified by the trade union of the particular locality in which the employment took place. The approximate wage scales for the workers in Yerevan was as follows:

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Salary Scales for Carpenters and Bricklayers
(Monthly and approximate)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Carpenters</u> (rubles)	<u>Bricklayers</u> (rubles)
7th	1,500 (Master carpenter)	2,000 (Master bricklayer)
6th	750 to 800	1,000 to 1,500
5th	600 to 650	800 to 900
4th	500 to 550	500 to 600
3rd	400 to 450	400 to 450
2nd	300 to 350	300 to 350
1st	200 to 250	200 to 250

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-7-

12.

[redacted] VOA broadcasts were widely listened to by the Armenians who have radios in their possession. However, these VOA broadcasts were continually jammed by the Soviets, making many of the programs unintelligible. Similarly, broadcasts emanating from Turkey were also heavily jammed by the Soviets. The heaviest Soviet jamming was concentrated on the large city areas in the Armenian SSR, with Yerevan serving as a focal point. The heaviest concentration of jamming occurred on VOA broadcasts at 1930 and 0145 hours. The least amount of jamming was between 0400 and 0700 hours. [redacted]

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[redacted] VOA broadcasts were relatively free from Soviet jamming, and reception was generally good. The program content was generally favorably received by the Armenians. Many feel that this was their only channel for receiving accurate information on conditions in the outside world. Despite Communist efforts to prevent people from listening to "capitalistic propaganda", [redacted] as more radios were made available on the market, more people will listen to foreign broadcasts.

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